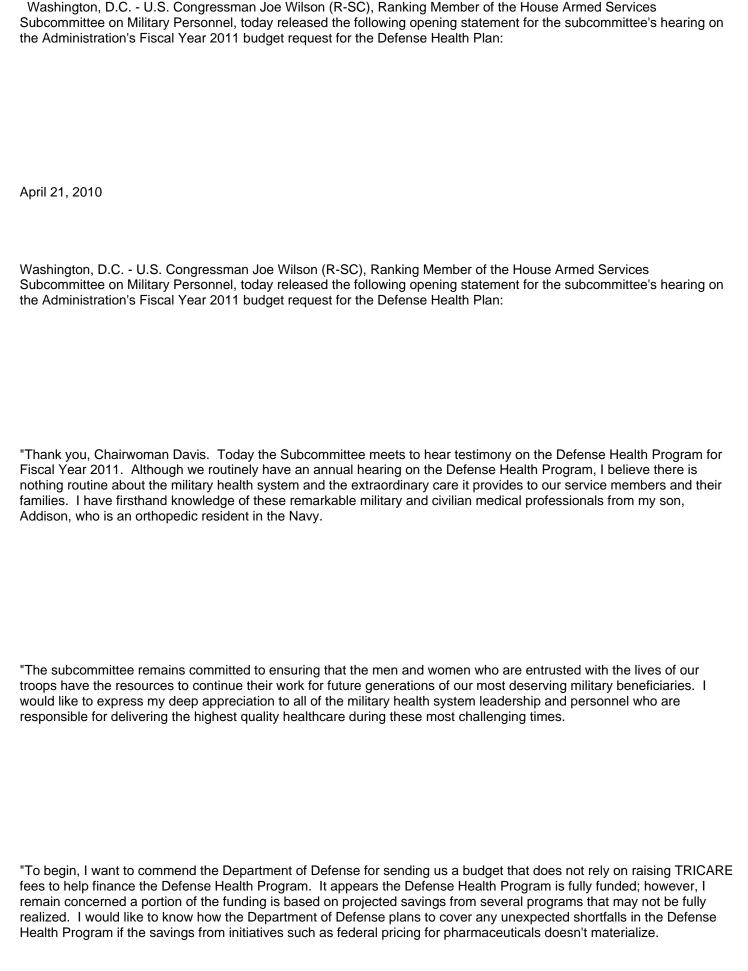
Wilson Opening Statement for Hearing on the Defense Health Plan



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"With that, I am anxious to hear from our witnesses today about the progress the Department has made in developing a comprehensive approach to providing world class health care to our beneficiaries while at the same time controlling costs. I would like to know how the Military Heath System is meeting the medical needs of our beneficiaries today and what process you use for determining the medical requirements of future beneficiaries. I am interested in knowing how you have included the stakeholders in military health care in the discussions about providing world class health care and the future of the Military Health System.
"Further, I would like to hear from the witnesses on how the Defense Health Program supports the critical mental health services needed by our service members and their families, particularly the National Guard and reserve members who rely primarily on TRICARE Standard.
"I would also like to better understand from our military Surgeons General whether the Defense Health Program will fully support their responsibility to maintain medical readiness, provide healthcare to eligible beneficiaries, provide battlefield medicine to our brave men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan and care for our combat veterans through the long recovery process when they become injured and wounded.
"Finally, with regard to TRICARE, which is now regarded as a health care delivery system worthy of emulation, I quite frankly don't understand why the Department of Defense would not want to explicitly protect it from any unintended consequences that may arise from the health care reform law. Congress has already acted to make clear and explicit what the recent health care reform bill did not-that TRICARE meets the statutory requirement for minimum essential health care. The Department of Defense did not object to that recent Congressional action. Now it's time to make explicit in law what President Obama promised would be explicit in the health care reform-the Secretary of Defense would remain in control of the DOD health care program. No one should object to Congress making that control explicit in law. While some may feel that this is an unnecessary precaution, we owe our military that clearly stated protection."

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